

AVANT-GARDE FILMS BY WOMEN SET

By LINDA GROSS

A two-hour overview of contributions made to avant-garde film making by pioneering women artists will be shown today at 8 p.m. in UCLA's Melnitz Auditorium.

Maya Deren's seminal "Meshes of the Afternoon," the haunting 18-minute black-and-white film made in 1943 when Deren was 21, is awesomely contemporary. The film, an inner journey, is a surrealistic confrontation with splintered selves, suicide and despair. Deren plays the central character, a woman destroyed by a weird chain of events—or fantasies.

"Meshes of the Afternoon" offers one of the most fearful images on film: a hooded figure who is an apparition of the character's divided self. The figure has a mirror for a face. The mirror-faced ghost is a sister in psychic anguish to Ingmar Bergman's tortured Johan in "Hour of the Wolf."

Shirley Clarke's "Bridges Go Round" (1957), a lyric ode to Manhattan, is an exhilarating superimpositional dance of New York bridges, a liquid film that choreographs the interplay among geometric bridges, skyline and water.

Sara Arledge's "What Is Man?" (1958) is a delightful parody of life in the 1950s that captures the hypocrisy, psychological jargon and contemporary rat race.

Germaine Dulac's "The Seashell and the Clergyman" (1928)—with a screenplay by Antonin Artaud—is a sophisticated and artful exploration of male sexual fantasies in which a frustrated clergyman pursues an elusive white-robed woman.

Films by Marie Menken, Mary Ellen Bute, Storm De Hirsch, Guvnor Nelson and Joyce Wieland also will be shown.

Information: 937-5544 or 825-2345.



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IT WOULD HELP HERE if you've had a brush with James Joyce's "Finnegans Wake," for the lady who sat still for this interview has a mind that reads along those lines. Sari Arledge, a spry-minded person into her 71st year, sat me down and offered me a whiskey. It being 9:30 a.m., I politely refused — the old stick-in-themud that I am.

She is making a new experimental film, based on, heaven knows (actually heaven does know), voiced with "destructured narrative." She was making these films in the beginning of the 40s, a lonely era, except for film pioneers, because, she says, there was no one around with whom to compare notes.

Recently settled at 132 Van Ness, and happy as a clam-what-am (the way she talks), she is currently looking for a three-headed dog as a film prop. One lady has offered to let her shoot her dog's head three times, but she hopes for better.

"The film opens at a mythological mirage sale," she says, punnily. "Some of the items for sale are, Venus De Milo, Winged Victory and Orpheus, all on the half-off table." Miss Arledge doesn't even wince when she says that.

There is one character called "Hatless Atlas."

And, at one point, another character, Hera, comments to Zeus, from her perch on some clouds, while looking down at some jet contrails, "Look at those jet droppings on our front lawn." It goes on like this.

* * *

But, I am getting either behind or ahead of my story.

Her living room is filled with sitar music. It goes on endlessly, as sitar music is wont to do.

Miss Arledge is blind in one eye, very talkative and bright.

It has only been during the past decade that her films have gained recognition. Last year some were shown at the International Festival of Women Artists in Copenhagen; they have been shown at the San Francisco Museum of Art, at the Knokki-Le Zoute, Belgium film festival, and last week at the SF Cinematique.

She made "What Is A Man?" during a time when, if she filmed the naked fronts of a man and woman Eastman Co. would not print the film. "Hair and nipples were out," said the lady.

She used three cameras, at one point, each one filming at a different angle simultaneously, and all films were superimposed onto one master.

A graduate of UCLA in 1936, before it began its film department, she was heavily into art, and went on to study at the Barnes Foundation back east. Her watercolors and oils have been shown in many top museums, including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Wally Trabing's Mostly about People



Lady With The Camera

She is best known, perhaps, for a painting called "The Zebras," which was made into prints. The painting was shown at the Metropolitan Museum in New York and reproduced by the thousands. It shows zebras among primitive palm trees, in the style of Rousseau.

After teaching art at the U. of Oklahoma and U. of Arizona, she experimented with what she calls transparencies.

Because she said she was too poor to afford art supplies, she began putting soot and watercolors on small squares of glass, then rubbing and etching out scenes, in both realistic and abstract styles. Projecting them on a screen, she discovered a new source of rich color and form and, she says, may have developed the first light show. Several of her films are based on these transparencies.

Her films use up to seven layers of color; disjointed dancers, fish-eye lenses, and reflections.

* * *

What startles many viewers is her zany form of narrative. In fact, she likes to make statements that will snap the head in a double-take.

On love: Do you know what the angry librarian said to her boyfriend?: "I'll cancel my subscription to your libido."

About filming: "Filmmaking is as serious a process as the growth of an orange tree."

A question: "If a woman is no better than she should be, how much better than she should be should she be?"

Uh, I think I'll take that drink, Miss Arledge.

Santa Cruz Sentinel
11/17/81
CIRCULATION

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Hi

Love

Sari